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ABSTRACT

This kit is designed to help employers understand the range of family needs emerging in the workplace and the numerous options for a company response. An introduction discusses the need for child care services, dependent care problems, and how employers respond and benefit. Sections address the following: selecting the right option in relation to corporate culture, employees' needs, and community resources; benefits, leaves, and services, including flexible benefits, maternity and family leave, personal leave time, work/family responsive services, and supervisor training; alternative work schedules, including flexitime, voluntary reduced time, part-time work, job sharing, phased retirement, and flexiplace; and dependent care options, such as on-site or near-site child care centers, consortium centers, resource and referral for child care, vouchers, discounts, programs for part-time or emergency care, sick-child care, and elder care services. Eighteen references and 53 resources are listed. The kit also provides a state-of-the-art review of the options, including for each a description, factors to consider, advantages, and disadvantages. The options are as follows: job sharing, flexitime, flexible leave policies, compressed workweek, part-time employment, flexiplace/telecommuting, voluntary reduced worktime, and telephone access. Information on implementing child care program options covers alternative work schedules, steps in developing them, advantages and disadvantages, and technical assistance needed. (YLB)

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Work and Family Resource Kit

U.S. Department of Labor
Office of the Secretary
Women's Bureau

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This "Work and Family Resource Kit" is designed to help employers understand the range of family needs emerging in the workplace and the numerous options for a company response. It provides a state-of-the-art review of these options as well as advantages and disadvantages. There are also references and resources to help employers select the most appropriate response for their employees' family needs.

The Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor is pleased to make the "Work and Family Resource Kit" available to employers to assist them, and ultimately their employees, in balancing the conflicting and competing demands of work and family life.

As a part of the Office of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Women's Bureau is the only Federal agency established exclusively to improve employment opportunities for women. This kit is one of numerous publication produced by the Women's Bureau to help further that goal.

WORK AND FAMILY LIFE: AN INTRODUCTION

"America has become a society in which everyone is expected to work—including women with young children. But many of society's institutions were designed during an era of male breadwinners and female homemakers. What is needed is a . . . reform of the institutions and policies that govern the workplace, to insure that women can participate fully in the economy and that men and women have the time and resources to invest in their children."

Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century
A Study by the Hudson Institute for the U.S. Department of Labor

Dramatic changes are taking place in the work force, and the impact is being felt in millions of workplaces and homes around the country. A surge in the number of working women—mothers with small children, female heads of households, and wives in dual-worker families—is producing economic and social realignments.

In 1991, women made up 45% of the work force. By the year 2000, they will account for nearly half of the work force and for two-thirds of the labor force growth. With a shrinking labor pool and a thriving service sector economy, women's employment needs are becoming increasingly important in recruitment, productivity, and other bottom-line considerations.

Men are not immune to the problems associated with combining work and family life. Well over half of working men have wives working full or part time, and an estimated 20% of working parents have some responsibility for an aging relative.

Increasingly, employers are being called upon to respond to their employees' needs to balance work and family responsibilities. Benefit packages, work schedules, and recruitment plans are being revised to include an innovative array of policies and programs.

Dependent care options range from on-site day care centers to voucher programs, flexible benefit plans, long-term care insurance, and maternity/family leave policies that include child and eldercare. Alternatives to the standard workweek include job sharing, voluntary reduced time, flexitime, and work-at-home options. Many companies are examining their values and style, and are responding in a variety of ways to ease work and family life conflicts of their employees.

DEPENDENT CARE PROBLEMS

- Dependent care problems affect a large portion of the employee population:
  - —32% of the work force is comprised of working parents (with children under age 18), according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
  - —58% of all women with children under age 6 are in the labor force. Most women who bear children during their careers return to work soon after their babies are born; more than half of all married women are back at work by the time their children are a year old.
  - —A survey of 8,121 workers in Oregon, conducted by Portland State University, found that the fathers and mothers whose children cared for themselves were the workers most affected on the job by missed days, lateness, interruptions, and early departures. In fact, the highest absenteeism rate for all employees was for men whose children were in self-care.
  - —An increasing number of working parents have elder care problems. A study by the Travelers Insurance Company found that 28% of its employees provided care for a friend or relative aged 55 or older.

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- Women have the major responsibility for the family's dependent care:
  - —About 14 million children are in one-parent families; most are being raised by their mothers.
  - —Nearly 68% of women who maintain families are in the labor force.
  - —In a Boston University study, married male parents reported that their wives (whether employed or not) spend two to four times as many hours a week on home chores and child care as they do.
  - —Women employees are twice as likely to stay home with a sick child (65%) as are male employees (32%).

HOW EMPLOYERS RESPOND

- An employer's response may depend upon the company's size, industry, location, and economic condition, among other factors.
  - —A small company may pursue more flexible work policies, while a larger company may invest in community services. Both small and large employers can pool their efforts in consortium arrangements.
  - —The motivations for small business involvement in child care are not that different from those of large companies, according to a study conducted by Berkeley Planning Associates for the Small Business Administration. Among the 24 firms studied, 6 sponsored day care centers and the others pursued the options common to large companies: flexible benefits, information and referral, flexible work hours, and contributions to community services.
- An employer may spend up to a year planning and researching a comprehensive program tailored to the company's needs the effort may involve:
  - —A task force
  - —Employee survey
  - —Focus groups
  - —Supervisory interviews
  - —Community needs assessments
  - —Analysis of what other companies are implementing

  Some employers hire qualified consultants to assist in developing a tailored program, which in the long run may out costs.
- An employer with a unionized work force may decide to involve the union in some or all phases of the process, from information gathering and needs assessment to decision making and implementation. Another employer may find that collective bargaining is a more effective route for addressing work and family needs.
- Employers are concerned about equity, particularly for employees without dependents, when instituting at work/family program or policy.
  - —Company surveys indicate that almost all employees—those with and without dependents-rate the possibility of a work/family program very positive. Once a program or policy has been introduced, companies report a highly favorable reaction from employees, who feel better about a company that recognizes its own productivity needs and at the same time cares about its employees.

HOW EMPLOYERS BENEFIT

- National surveys on employer perceptions of the benefits of child care programs report an increase in productivity, morale, and loyalty and a decrease in absenteeism, turnover, and tardiness. (Elder care initiatives are more recent; thus, no comparable evaluation research has been conducted.)
- In a survey conducted by the National Employer-Supported Child Care Project, published in 1984, 90% of the 178 companies responding said that the child care service their business offered had improved employee morale; 85% said their ability to recruit had been affected positively; and 85% noted more positive public relations. Similar studies continue to support such results.

SELECTING THE RIGHT OPTION

There are numerous information sources and strategies that companies may use when selecting appropriate responses to family needs. The process should take into consideration employee needs and the bottom-line concerns of the organization.

Strategies for determining the right option include research, employee task forces, or outside consultation. Among the tools that can help produce needed information are surveys, interviews, and visits to other companies. Regardless of which method is selected, assessments must include the following information:

- Insights into the company's culture and the types of programs that should be considered.

- Specific problems employees face in balancing their job and family responsibilities.
- Community resources and the extent to which resources do and do not meet employee needs.
- Federal, State, and local government initiatives.

CORPORATE CULTURE

Every workplace has its own set of values and style. Although these are often unwritten, they affect decision making at every level. It is important to take the company's culture into consideration when assessing its view of family issues as a legitimate business concern, the timing of a proposal for family-supportive changes, and the efforts made by other companies.

What is the company's view of family issues as a legitimate business concern? This question may involve senior management. Management support for an investigation of work and family issues might come in the form of a mandate originating at the top of the company, the sanctioning of a bottom-up initiative, or a shared responsibility among

various levels of employees. Although management may be willing to support the exploration of work/family issues, this does not guarantee later acceptance of proposed recommendations. Thus, research should be accompanied by an educational effort to dispel family-issue stereotypes and to prepare for eventual recommendations.

What is the most appropriate time to propose a family responsive change? Timing depends on the stability and economic health of the organization as well as reactions to other newly implemented programs. It is important to look beyond initial assumptions. While common sense may indicate that the period following downsizing is the wrong time to introduce a proposal for family support, some companies have found that the increased stress and low morale associated with layoffs make it a good time to address family concerns.

What kinds of work/family programs are competitors offering? Most companies begin their investigations with a review of programs in companies that are similar to their own in terms of industry, size, region, number of employees, degree of unionization, and corporate culture. Because corporate responses to family needs are often shaped by the supply of services in the community as well as the family demographics of the region, it is important to weigh these conditions when considering another company's program.

EMPLOYEES' NEEDS

Determining family needs is an important yet sensitive component of the research process. An inquiry should not raise expectations beyond the options that the company considers feasible. Information about employee needs is available from internal and external data sources, employee surveys, and focus groups.

Government Sources—The Bureau of the Census has reliable data on family demographics. Data services also provide geographically specific information. The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor has information on work force data and trends. Another Federal source is the Department of Health and Human Services, which includes the Social Security Administration and other departmental agencies concerned with the health and welfare of families. Copies of many Government publications are available free.

Organizations in the community may already have analyzed census data. State agencies also have demographic information that can be used to project needs within a particular employee population. Companies can assess the ability of the local population to pay for needed services and make projections about the demands for services with data on average family income, costs of raising a family in today's economy, and the birth rate.

Internal Data—A variety of sources within the company can provide demographic data or some insight into possible work/family strains. While few companies organize their personnel records according to the family structure, employers do have knowledge about families through insurance claims, counseling programs, tax records, and child-support payments. Though much of this information is confidential and may not be reviewed by unauthorized personnel, it can indicate the scope of need.

Employee Surveys—Most companies find there is no better way to understand the family needs of employees than by asking them directly. All employees may be surveyed or a random sample may be taken. Large firms may conduct a formal survey; small employers may decide to talk informally with their staff. Surveys may be conducted by an outside consultant or in collaboration with the union or a community agency.

Demographic questions should be asked to determine scope of need; questions about current arrangements, satisfaction/dissatisfaction with services, and various other aspects of services will help to identify the nature of family needs as well as how family issues affect work behavior. Survey questions should elicit responses to indicate attitudes of employees and managers about company support for programs. Also, the questionnaire should ask employees to identify their preferences for family-support services, but only those options the employer is willing to implement should be included.

Some companies make a special effort to involve supervisors in the decision making process through interviews or separate surveys, recognizing that they are the most likely to have heard about employee problems. Their involvement might also prevent later problems in the implementation of programs. Studies have found that supervisors can have a profound effect on work/family policies. Having such a policy, while critically important, does not ensure that employers will reap its benefits; successful implementation depends on the supervisor. Studies in both corporations and factories show that sensitivity and flexibility of the immediate supervisor have a profound impact on the employee's mental and physical well-being. The research found that having a supervisor who is flexible when employees have family emergencies or problems balancing the responsibilities of job and family is predictive of that employee's higher job satisfaction, lower stress, and fewer stress-related health problems.

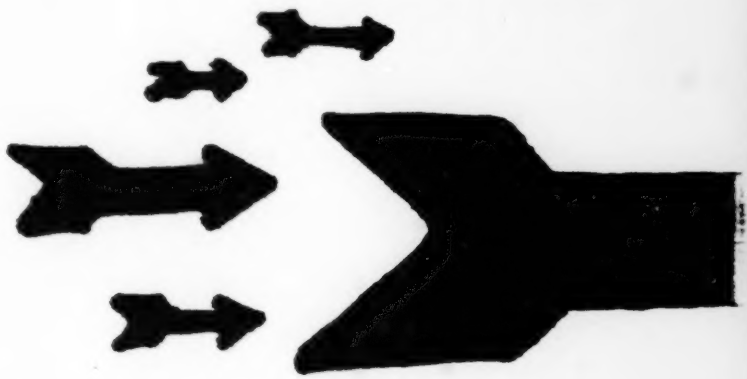
Focus Groups—Focus groups can stand alone as a means of assessing needs or they can provide anecdotal information that clarifies survey data. Group discussions can provide important information to strengthen the rationale for programs. In focus groups, typically 8 to 15 employees representing various groups of employees are convened for 1- to 2-hour discussions led by a trained focus group leader. They are asked questions such as: What is the proper role of the company in responding to the work/family needs of employees? What are the most important needs? What solutions would you suggest? What are the pros and cons of these solutions?

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

An examination of community resources identifies existing gaps and helps to avoid unnecessary duplication of services already avail able. A look at community resources may reveal more accurately whether problems relate to accessibility or availability, and will help companies decide on the most useful response.

Contact with the community also identifies experts who can help align the company with the best talent and most efficient strategies for implementing the firm's response to family needs. These experts can become a link to information about other corporate or government initiatives. Companies may want to identify the major child care programs used by employees; visits to these providers can help define standards of quality and prevailing fees.

Liability often becomes a concern at this stage of the investigation and must be addressed, especially by employers considering a child care center. Other requirements/regulations to be considered may be identified by a review of local, State, and Federal policies. Policy review is also useful in predicting forthcoming change and opportunities for public/private partnerships.



Sources of community information include:

- Prominent service providers of child care/elder care; resource and referral agencies.
- United Way agencies.
- Area agencies on aging.
- Chambers of commerce.
- Mayors' offices.
- State licensing agencies.
- College/university departments of child development, gerontology, social work, or business.
- Professional associations for pertinent fields, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).
- Civic groups such as the Junior League Kiwanis, YWCA, and American Association of University Women (AAUW).
- County and city departments of family services or human resources.
- State, city, county, commissions on the status of women.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

A review of the references and resource listings in this kit will identify publications that describe government efforts in addition to agencies and organizations involved in or knowledgeable about Federal, State, and local initiatives. Also, the community sources listed above offer leads to government as well as corporate responses.

BENEFITS, LEAVES, AND SERVICES

FLEXIBLE BENEFITS

A flexible benefit or cafeteria plan allows employees to choose from a "menu" to taxable and nontaxable benefits that suit their individual needs. The program may be in the form of a comprehensive cafeteria plan or a flexible spending account/salary reduction plan.

COMPREHENSIVE CAFETERIA PLAN

Employers are allowed a chose in benefits through Section 123 of the IRS Code, created in the 1978 Revenue Act. Employees receive a set of core benefits and the use of flexible credits to purchase more core benefits or optional benefits that are either taxable or nontaxable. Credits are generated by employer contributions based on salary and are placed in a credit account for the employee.

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNT

This is a simplified flexible plan the maintains the standard benefits package. under this plan, the employer sets up an account for optional benefits such as health and dependent care. The account may include employer contributions, but is most often funded through salary reduction. When the employer sets up a dependent care assistance plan in the benefit package, employees can spend pre-tax dollars on their dependent care needs. The Dependent Care Assistance Plan (DCAP) is one of the more popular plans because the comp any assumes only administrative costs.

Advantages

- Creates equity in benefits while meeting a variety of employee needs;
- Is a flexible response to the needs of a diverse work force;
- Benefits cost can be controlled or reduced, and
- Salary reduction is a low-cost item for the employer, who saves money is reduced unemployment and social security taxes.

Disadvantages

- Implementation/administrative costs may be high in a comprehensive cafeteria plan;
- Tax law uncertainties exist due to the lack of final regulations on Section 125 and ongoing debates on tax reform and budget deficits.
- Financial assistance in the form of benefits may not be helpful in meeting dependent care needs if there is an inadequate supply of services;
- Lower paid employees may benefit more from the Individual Dependent Care Tax Credit than from salary reduction because salary reduction lowers cash income and there generally is a waiting period for reimbursement, and
- Flexible spending accounts are capped at $5,000 and employees must use the money in his account by the year's end or forfeit it.

MATERNITY AND FAMILY LEAVE

The 1978 Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA) requires that employers adhere to two basic principles:

- Employers must permit physically fit pregnant employees to continue to work just as any other physically fit employee, and
- When women become unable to work physically due to complications of pregnancy, childbirth, and/or recovery following childbirth, they are entitled to any sick leave, disability benefit, health insurance, or other benefits extended to other employees who, becauseof a physical condition, are unable to work.

Employers are not required by the Act to provide special benefits (such as disability benefits) to pregnant workers where none have existed for all workers. A few States, by law or regulation, require employers to grant short-term, unpaid disability leave with reinstatement to pregnant women only. In January 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court uphold the legality of such a law in California.

In 1988, California, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico mandated employer participation in temporary disability insurance programs that provide disabled male and female employees with partial wage replacement up to 26 weeks. These long-standing State programs have proven to be cost effective wage replacement systems for workers who are unable to perform their jobs due to a non-work-related disability.

Several States have passed maternity and family leave statutes. In 1991, over half of the States and the Federal Government are considering similar legislation.

Advantages

- Helps employees adjust to the new role of parent;
- Helps retain employees;
- Preserves employers' training investments in women, and
- Reduces infant care expenses for the employee.

Disadvantages

- Smaller companies may have difficulty finding or training replacements.

PERSONAL LEAVE TIME

Companies may offer employees personal leave or personal days. Such time can be used by parents to attend to sick children or other family business.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 11% of workers in small establishments had formal personal leave plans allowing them to be absent from work with pay for reasons not covered by other specific leave plans. Twenty-two percent of workers in medium and large establishments had paid personal leave available.

The Social Security Administration reports that almost two-thirds of wage and salary workers are protected against loss of income from temporary, short-term disability. The major forms of protection are insurance and sick leave.

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WORK/FAMILY RESPONSIVE SERVICES

Companies offer individual counseling on work/family problems under the auspices of corporate employee assistance plans or through wellness programs.

Information on parenting is provided through work and family seminars or written materials such as newsletters, which help employees manage their job and family responsibilities.

WORK AND FAMILY MANAGER

Companies may choose to designate a work and family manager whose responsibilities include, but are not limited to, program assessment and design, internal consultation, program coordination, management/employee liaison, marketing, training coordination, and spokesperson. The rules of the work and family manager vary with the company and tend to change as the family responsive policies are developed and implemented.

SUPERVISOR TRAINING

Providing management personnel with the skills needed to manage a diverse work force benefits the company as a whole. Recent studies have found supportive supervisors to be a significant factor in the retention of employees with pressing family needs.

In addition to general management training, training should accompany the implementation of flexible work schedules, maternity and parental leave policies, as well as family-responsive benefit policies.

ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES

FLEXITIME

Flexitime was introduced in U.S. companies over 20 years ago as a way to ease commuting and energy problems. Today's use of flexitime centers around employees' needs for greater flexibility in the workplace in order to help them balance responsibilities at home with those at work.

Under flexitime, employees choose the time they arrive and the time they leave, as long as they accumulate the prescribed number of hours per day or week. There generally is a core time when all employees must be present each day. It is estimated that between 30 and 40% of workers have a flexitime option.

Advantages

- Low cost, popular benefit;
- Provides flexibility that can be useful to all employees in a variety of family situations, and
- Improvement in work performance and morale can come from employees' increased control and flexibility in their schedules.

Disadvantages

- May face resistance from supervisors;
- May encounter problems in communication and coverage throughout the day, and
- Requires special application in a manufacturing setting.

VOLUNTARY REDUCED TIME

"V-Time" is an option that enables employees to reduce their work time and pay by 5%-50% for a specified period-usually 6 to 12 months. Workers retain their benefits and seniority status on a prorated basis. Companies have begun to offer this option to help employees meet family, personal, or schooling needs, as well as an alternative to layoffs.

Advantages

- Makes reduced work time available to a larger labor pool because it can be done in small increments;
- Improves retention by enabling employees to adjust schedules rather than leave their jobs;
- Improves conditions of part-time work by allowing workers to retain benefits and employment rights;
- Increases the ability of the organization to expand or contract, and
- Is an effective recruitment tool.

Disadvantages

- Requires program development and policy change.

PART-TIME WORK

Part-time schedules may refer to portions of days, weeks, months, or years. Part-timers may be temporary or permanent employees. Te mporary part-timers typically do not receive benefits, but employees who work a minimum prescribed number of hours usually receive prorated vacation and sick leave. They may also participate in the company's pension plan. Part-timers usually are not covered by employers' health insurance plans. In 1989, one-fifth of the American work force consisted of part-timers.

Advantages

- Allows recruitment from a larger labor pool that otherwise might not be available;
- Permits employer to fit the size of the work force to the workload;
- Increases possibility of retaining experienced workers, and
- Part-timers have been shown to be very productive on the job.

Disadvantages

- May involve extra cost because of fixed labor cost per employee, and
- Requires management to change perception that such workers are less committed.

JOB SHARING

Two workers who are compatible share the responsibilities of one full-time job or share separate, but related, assignments. Job sharing also can consist of unrelated part-time assignments that simply share a budget line.

Advantages

- Availability of part-time positions where previously not possible;
- Potential for a wider range of skills and experience in the shared job;
- Retention of experienced employees;
- Can create a more effective job schedule, and
- Allows for continuity of coverage—if one person leaves, someone knowledgeable is still available.

Disadvantages

- Benefit inequities may be perceived;
- Lack of information about how job sharing works can lead to mid-management resistance, and
- It may be difficult to evaluate individual performance if work assignments overlap.

PHASED RETIREMENT

Phased retirement offers an employee the opportunity to make a gradual transition from full-time work to retirement with an interim period of part-time work. Eligibility is usually based on age or years of service. A company's phased retirement plan may include a mentorship program whereby a replacement employee is paired with the retiring employee for the purpose of training.

Advantages

- Accommodates the transitional needs of valued employees, and
- Mentorship makes use of valuable knowledge, provided "mentor" and "mentee" are compatible.

Disadvantages

- May require program development and policy change regarding pension formulas.

FLEXIPLACE (AT-HOME WORK)

Certain types of work, especially information-based jobs, provide opportunities for work at home. Handicapped persons, older worker s, and working mothers may benefit from "flexiplace" and "telecommuting" arrangements. Working mothers with small children, however, may find that they need additional child care support to accomplish work tasks.

Advantages

- Improved recruitment/retention of those unable or unwilling to commute;
- Improved productivity because many at-home workers face fewer distractions and can schedule their work at preferred times;
- Potential for reduced office space costs, and
- Better utilization of resources in computer-related jobs through an extended workday.

Disadvantages

- Requires management to change traditional supervisory methods to measure performance of at-home workers.
- Possible resentment by those who feel they must cover for at-home workers or those whose jobs do not permit such arrangements, and
- Special attention must be given to preserving the work rights of home-based workers including job security, pension and other benefits, and job advancement.

DEPENDENT CARE OPTIONS

CHILD CARE SERVICES

An estimated 5,600 private employers provide some form of child care support for their employees. Most companies accomplish this by providing a dependent care information service and/or financial assistance. Some employers create or contribute to child care centers, family day care homes (friends or neighbors who care for children in their own homes), or after-school programs. Due to the vast need, child care has been an innovative area for public/private partnerships.

ON-SITE OR NEAR-SITE CHILD CARE CENTERS

In 1991, about 250 companies, 900 hospitals, and 250 government agencies provided financial support for or sponsored child care centers on or near the worksite. Many employers subsidize the cost so that all employees can afford the program. Liability insurance usually is available at reasonable rates.

Advantages

- An effective labor recruitment tool;
- Reliable child care reduces employee absenteeism,
- High visibility involvement improves community relations, and
- Operating hours can be adapted to work-shift requirements and employees' needs.

Disadvantages

- Start-up may be expensive;
- Requires ongoing monitoring and financial support to ensure quality and affordability;
- Employee use limited by space constraints, commuting patterns, curriculum and location preferences;
- May be more difficult for multisite company, and
- Liability insurance must be purchased.

CONSORTIUM CENTERS

Groups of employers share the cost and benefits of establishing and operating a child care center. This is advantageous to small employers who cannot afford such an endeavor alone. Consortia are popular in industrial parks, shopping malls, and downtown locations. It is often best to have a neutral coordinator of a consortium effort.

Advantages

- Resources, liability, and costs are shared, enabling small employers to participate, and
- Combined labor force protects the center from underenrollment.

Disadvantages

- Requires negotiations among participating companies, and
- Combined labor force needs might surpass resources available at one center.

RESOURCE AND REFERRAL FOR CHILD CARE

Resource and referral services counsel employees on how to find and judge quality child care. They improve the quality of care by providing training for child care providers. An effective referral program increases the supply of care by helping to recruit and retain qualified providers. Some 1,500 companies nationwide offer their employees such services. They supplement the services with parenting seminars, support groups, handbooks, hotlines and caregiver fairs.

Advantages

- Start-up and maintenance costs are relative low;
- Enables parents to locate appropriate child care services with established reputations that are less likely to break down;
- Serves all child care needs, allowing parents to make the best choices for their individual situations;
- Works well for multisite corporations that want to provide for all corporate workers;
- Identifies employee needs and provides planning data for future company child care initiatives, and
- Stimulants the creation of new child care services as needs arise.

Disadvantages

- Effectiveness depends on identification of local community resources until provider recruitment programs take effect;
- Requires a commitment to publicize the worksite availability, and
- May be expensive.

VOUCHERS

In a voucher system, the company subsidizes a percentage of parents's child care costs at programs selected by the parent. The comp any may pay the provider directly or reimburse the employee. The value of the voucher may be offered as a flat fee, a percentage of cost, or be limited to those below a certain family income level.

Advantages

- Allows parents to choose their child care arrangement, and
- Supports many community child care services.

Disadvantages

- Vouchers can be costly;
- Limiting eligibility by income may pose equity questions, and
- If community-based care is unavailable or poor quality, vouchers alone will not solve these problems.

DISCOUNTS

Some companies negotiated employee discounts with child care providers. Typically, a child care center lowers its fee by 10% and the employer contributes 10% of the fees, so the employees receive a 20% reduction in their child care costs.

Advantages

- Low cost, minimal administration;
- System expands or contracts according to employee needs;
- Limited liability, and
- Favorable publicity for the employer as vendors promote the center.

Disadvantages

- Employees must use selected vendors, and
- Employees can be turned away when slots are filled.

PROGRAMS FOR PART-TIME OR EMERGENCY CARE

Before- And After-School Care

Because school and work hours vary, attention to the needs of school-age children after school can reduce parental worry on the job. Employers can support after-school programs in the public schools or in community agencies. Employers can also sponsor "warm lines"—call-in services that provide assistance or reassurance to older children at home alone—or seminars that help these children learn skills for staying at home alone.

Travel Care

The Company provides reimbursement for child care cost incurred by work-related travel.

SICK-CHILD CARE

Employers may opt to participate in a number of ways:

- Making arrangements with a health care facility to provide in-home for mildly ill children and subsidizing part of the cost based on family income;
- Providing contributions or making arrangements with hospital sick-care facilities or in community agencies for care of mildly ill children;
- Providing funds to help local child card centers create their own sick-bay facilities, and
- Providing sanctioned personal or family leave days so employees may remain at home with sick dependents.

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ELDER CARE SERVICES

An estimated 25%-30% of any work force may have caregiving responsibility for aging relatives. Employees might provide personal services such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, or transportation. They may have infirm relatives living with them or may face the problem of providing care over long distances. Employees may also face financial drain and emotional strain due to the cost of medical or long-term care. Employers have begun to observe the negative effects on work performance as the result of elder care responsibilities and are responding with information, financial assistance for employees, and contributions to local programs.

Resource and Referral for Elder Care

In the same way that resource and referral aids families with child care needs, resource and referral services for elder care help familiarize employees with an array of services for the elderly, including medical, custodial, housing, legal, and counseling services. Employers also provide needed information about elder care through seminars, support groups, handbooks, hotlines, and employee assistance programs.

On- or Near-Site Adult Day Care

Companies can develop on-site or support local, adult day care centers with financial or in-kind contributions. One company plans to turn it on-site child care center into an intergenerational center.

Visiting Nurse Services

Companies provide reimbursement or direct subsidies to employees for visiting nurse costs, thereby making it easier for employees to go to work when medical needs arise among their elderly dependents.

Respite Care

Employers cover some of the costs associated with hiring a caregiver so that employees can take a brief vacation from their caregiving responsibilities.

Long-Term Care Insurance

This new health insurance helps employees pay for long-term care for themselves or dependent children, spouses, or parents. Designed to fill gaps in Medicaid and Medicare coverage, long-term care insurance plans may cover home health services, adult day care, and respite care. Although employees are usually expected to pay full premium for these policies, they are less expensive than what employees could purchase on their own in the market.

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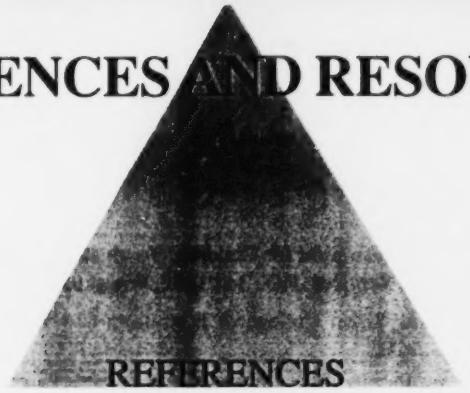

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GENERAL

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, P.O. Box 1182, Washington, DC 20013, (202) 245–0354.

Bank Street College of Education, 610 West 112th Street, New York, NY 10025, (212) 875–4651.

Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. 1231 25th Street, NW., Washington, DC 20037, (202) 452–4200.

Catalyst, 250 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10002, (212) 777–8900.

Center on Work and Family, Boston University, One University Road, Boston, MA 02215, (617) 353–7225.

Coalition of Labor Union Women, 15 Union Square New York, NY 10003, (212) 242–0700.

The Conference Board, Work and Family Information Center, 845 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022, (212) 759–0900.

Families and Work Institute, c/o Dana E. Friedman and Ellen Galinsky, 330 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001, (212) 465–2004.

Family Resource Coalition, Suite 1520, 200 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60604, (312) 341–0900.

Family Service America, 11700 West Lake Park Drive, Park Place, Milwaukee, WI 53224, (414) 359–1040.

9 to 5, National Association of Working Women, 614 Superior Avenue, NW., Cleveland, OH 44113, (216) 566–9038.

Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO, 1313 L Street, NW., Washington, DC 20005, (202) 898–3200.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20201, (202) 690–6867.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE., Washington, DC 20212, (202) 606–7828.

U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20210, (202) 219–6652.

U.S. Small Business Administration, 409 Third Street, SW., Washington, DC 20417, (800) 827–5722.

Wellesley College center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA 02181, (617) 283–2500.

Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, Clearinghouse on Work and Family, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20210, (80 0) 827–5335.

Yale Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University, P.O. Box 11A, Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520–7447, (20 3) 432–4576.

Zero to Three, 2000 14th Street North, Suite 380, Arlington, VA 22201, (703) 528–4300.

BENEFITS

Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2121 K Street, NW., Suite 1600, Washington, DC 20037, (202) 775–6356.

Employers Council on Flexible Compensation, 927 15th Street, NW., Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 659–4300.

National Women's Law Center, 1616 P Street, NW., Suite 100, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 328–5160.

LEAVE POLICIES

Association of Junior Leagues, 660 First Avenue, New York, NY 10016, (212) 683–1515.

Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues, 2471 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20215, (202) 225–6740.

Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1400 20th Street, NW., Suite 104, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 785–5100.

International Foundation on Employee Benefit Plans, P.O. Box 69, Brookfield, WI 53008, (414) 786–6700.

National Council of Jewish Women, 53 West 23rd Street, 6th floor, New York, NY 10013, (212) 645–4048.

NOW Legal Defense Fund, 99 Hudson Street, Suite 1201, New York, NY 10013, (212) 925–6635.

ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES

Association of Part-Time Professionals, Crescent Plaza, Suite 216 7700 Leesburg Pike, McLean, VA 22102, (703) 734–7975.

New Ways To Work, 149 Ninth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, (415) 555–1000.

Project for Home Based Work, Center for Human Environments, The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036, (212) 642–2530.

Work in America Institute of Scarsdale, 700 White Plains Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583, (914) 472–9600.

CHILD CARE

Center for Parenting Studies, Wheelock College, 200 The Riverway, Boston, MA 02215, (617) 734–5200, ext. 214.

Child Care Action Campaign, 330 Seventh Avenue, 17th floor, New York, NY 10011, (212) 239–0138.

Child Care Law Center, 22 Second Street, San Francisco, CA 94105, (415) 495–5498.

Children's Defense Fund, 122 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20001, (202) 628–8787.

Home and School Institute, Inc., 1201 16th Street, NW., Room 228, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 466–3633.

National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20009, (800) 424–2460.

Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University, P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97207–0751, (503) 229–4040.

School-Age Child Care Project, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA 02181, (617) 235–0320.

ELDER CARE

Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Information Office, Building 31, Room 5027, 9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20892, (301) 496–1752.

Alliance for Aging Research, 2021 K Street, NW., Suite 305, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 293–2856.

American Association of Retired Persons, 1909 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20049, (202) 662–4800.

American Society on Aging, 833 Market Street, Suite 512, San Francisco, CA 94103, (415) 543–2617.

Center for the Study on Aging, University of Bridgeport, 136 Lafayette Street, Bridgeport, CT 06601, (203) 576–4175.

National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA), 2033 K Street, NW., Suite 304, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 785–0707.

National Council on the Aging, 409 3rd Street, SW., 2nd floor, Washington, DC 20024, (202) 479–1200.

New York Business Group on Health, 622 Third Avenue, 34th floor, New York, NY 10017, (212) 808–0550.

Older Women's League, 666 11th Street, NW., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 783–6686.

Philadelphia Geriatrics Center, 5301 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19141, (215) 456–2900.

Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University, P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 92707–0751, (505) 725–4040.

Washington Business Group on Health, Institute on Aging, Work, and Health, 777 North Capitol Street, NE., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 408–9320.

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OPTION SYNOPSIS

Job Sharing

Description: Two (or more) workers share the duties of one full-time job, each working part time, or two or more workers who have unrelated part-time assignments share the same budget line.

Factors To Consider

- Employees' needs/interests should be determined through a needs assessment.
- Job sharers may perform all elements of the job or divide the tasks, depending on the skills and expertise of each worker and the requirements of the job.
- Some common "splits" of jobs are by:
  --daily hours,
  --alternating days,
  --weeks in a biweekly pay period.
- Division of benefits--Most employers split salary and holiday pay 50-50, as well as the accrual of vacation days, sick leave, and other benefits. Some companies base vacation time on seniority and assume the full cost of health and dental coverage.

Advantages

- Makes part-time positions more available.
- Makes available a wider range of skills and experiences at no additional cost.
- Creates a flexible schedule for workers with family responsibilities; increases productivity and morale.
- Allows for job continuity if one worker leaves.

Disadvantages

- Splitting benefits may lead to inequities or to increased administrative duties.
- Overlap of assignments may complicate performance evaluation.

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OPTION SYNOPSIS

Flexitime

Description: A work schedule which allows employees to vary their arrival and/or departure times, as long as they work a prescribed number of hours a pay period and are present during a daily "core time."

Factors To Consider

- Employees' needs/interests should be determined through a needs assessment.
- The variations of flexitime provide for:

  --the preselection of a daily starting time with the option to change to a new time at specified intervals;

  --the option to modify the daily starting time as desired;

  --the option to vary the length of the workday as long as core hours are observed, or to vary the workweek as long as the required weekly or biweekly hours are met.

Advantages

- It is a low-cost, popular benefit.
- Absenteeism is reduced and tardiness virtually eliminated; worker morale is improved and productivity is often increased.

Disadvantages

- Requires more careful planning of the workflow since employees will not be on the same schedule.
- Office coverage must be carefully coordinated.

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OPTION SYNOPSIS

Flexible Leave Policies

Description: Systems that allow accrued sick and annual leave to be combined for employees' use as they choose. Policies may also include paid or unpaid "personal leave time."

Factors To Consider

- Employees' needs/interests should be determined through a needs assessment.
- Administrative and policy changes are required when a company changes from separate annual and sick leave policies to a combined approach.
- Changes need to be carefully planned to ensure that employees are not penalized in their leave accrual rates.
- Marketing and publicity are essential so that all employees understand how the flexible leave policy works.
- If personal leave time is to be made available, clearly defined guidelines need to be established.

Advantages

- Can reduce sick leave abuse, enhance worker productivity, and improve job satisfaction.
- Allows employees the flexibility to take time off for family concerns without jeopardizing their jobs.
- Can be an effective recruitment and retention tool.

Disadvantages

- May add to administrative costs when the system is first implemented.

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OPTION SYNOPSIS

Compressed Workweek

Description: Any work schedule that enables a full-time employee to work the equivalent of a full week in less than 5 days, or for employees on biweekly pay schedules, to work less than 10 full workdays.

Factors To Consider

- Employees' needs/interests should be determined through a needs assessment.
- The most common forms of compressed schedules are:
  4-10--a ten-hour, four-day week;
  5-4/9--nine hour days for eight days of a biweekly period and eight hours on the ninth day.

Advantages

- Can reduce absenteeism.
- Permits increased services to customers, since business hours are extended at least 2 hours a day.
- For firms using extensive computer operations, permits more economical use of equipment and on-line time.

Disadvantages

- Management and supervision may become more difficult, since employees and supervisors may not be present at the worksite at the same time.
- Longer workdays may induce worker fatigue.

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OPTION SYNOPSIS

Part-Time Employment

Description: May refer to portions of days, weeks, months, or years worked by temporary or permanent employees, but is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) as working less than 35 hours a week.

Factors To Consider

- Employees' needs/interests should be determined through a needs assessment.
- May be beneficial to employers with a large percentage of women in their work force.
- Particularly advantageous where business is not limited to an 8-hour day, 5-day week.
- The feasibility of prorating benefits and whether career ladders can be established to provide for advancement.

Advantages

- Employers have a larger pool from which to recruit.
- Allows flexibility in fitting the work force to the workload, especially during peak period demands.
- Can lower absenteeism/tardiness and increase productivity.
- Can provide backup to full-time staff.

Disadvantages

- May involve extra costs for the employer because of fixed labor costs per employee or because of the provision of prorated benefits.
- Managers may perceive part-timers as less committed.
- Worker dissatisfaction and turnover may occur if few or no benefits or promotion opportunities are provided.

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OPTION SYNOPSIS

Flexiplace-Telecommuting

Description: Workers perform duties at home or at a satellite worksite and are usually connected to their offices through a computer and/or a telephone.

Factors To Consider

- Employees' needs/interests should be determined through a needs assessment.
- Adherence to labor laws and regulations as they relate to protection of workers' rights.
- The extension of employee rights and benefits to telecommuters.
- The effect on conventional advancement opportunities.

Advantages

- Provides larger recruitment pool, including the handicapped, older workers, and working mothers.
- Can increase productivity by allowing employees to schedule their work at preferred times and with fewer interruptions.
- Reduces office space costs.
- Allows for an extended workday and permits access to the computer at offpeak times.

Disadvantages

- Traditional supervisory methods are not appropriate; measuring a worker's performance can be more difficult.
- Initial expenses may be high due to the acquisition of the electronic equipment needed.
- Rigorous planning must be done in order to preserve the employment rights of telecommuters (job security and advancement, pension rights, other benefits).

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OPTION SYNOPSIS

Voluntary Reduced Worktime

Description: Enables employees to reduce their worktime and salary by a specified amount (usually 5% to 50%) for a specified period (6 to 12 months) or permanently, while retaining benefits and seniority on a prorated basis.

Factors To Consider

- Employees' needs/interests should be determined through a needs assessment.
- Policy changes may be necessary to allow both managers and employees flexibility in negotiating such schedules.

Advantages

- Improves retention of experienced employees by allowing them to adjust their schedules rather than quit and to retain their benefits and employment rights.
- Can increase productivity and worker morale and be an effective recruitment tool.

Disadvantages

- For employers who prorate benefits, administrative costs may rise if payroll and personnel systems have to be changed.

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OPTION SYNOPSIS

Telephone Access

Description: Allows working parents to receive phone calls from family members at any time (not just in emergencies) and to make calls to children, babysitters, or other caregivers.

Factors To Consider

- Employees' needs/interests should be determined through a needs assessment.
- A policy must be established that outlines how the telephone access program will be implemented.
- A system needs to be developed if the number of incoming and outgoing calls and the amount of time spent on each call will be monitored.
- All employees must be properly informed of the new policy.

Advantages

- A low cost or no cost option for employers.
- Improves employee morale and reduces stress on parents; contributes to lower absenteeism and higher productivity.
- Is not difficult to implement.

Disadvantages

- May be abused by employees.
- Employees without dependents may resent the time spent on the phone by colleagues.

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HOW TO IMPLEMENT CHILD CARE PROGRAM OPTIONS

Alternative Work Schedules

As more and more workers struggle to reconcile their dual roles as workers and parents, employers have begun considering alternatives to the traditional workday and workweek in response to their employees' need for more flexibility in the workplace. Alternative work schedules, as the name implies, are options that allow employees to schedule their work hours and leave time in a way that permits them to meet family responsibilities without shirking job demands.

Instead of working a traditional 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. day, or a 5-day week, employees, depending on the option offered by the employer, adjust their arrival and departure time to suit their individual needs. This is commonly called flexitime, and requires only that the employee be at the workplace during specified hours, or the "core hours." Employees may also work longer hours each day but fewer days a week, thus working what is popularly called a compressed workweek. A third alternative is for employees to work out of their home instead of in the office, or to participate in flexiplace-telecommuting.

Options for alternative work schedules are:

- Flexible leave policies--systems that allow accrued sick and annual leave to be combined for employees' use as they choose. Policies may include paid or unpaid "personal leave time."

- Parental leave--sometimes called "family leave," a flexible policy that provides time off for mothers or fathers to care for newborn or very young children.

- Flexitime--work schedules which allow employees to vary their arrival and/or departure times, as long as they work a prescribed number of hours per pay period and are present during a daily "core time" (usually peak business hours).

- Job sharing--two (or more) workers share the duties of one full-time job, each working part-time; or, two or more workers who have unrelated part-time assignments share the same budget line.

- Compressed workweek--a work schedule enabling full-time employees to work the equivalent of a full week in less than 5 days, or for employees on bi-weekly pay schedules to work less than 10 full workdays.

- Part-time employment--can refer to portions of days, weeks, months, or years worked by temporary or permanent workers, but is defined by Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) as working less than 35 hours a week.

- Voluntary reduced worktime--employees can reduce their worktime and salary by a specified amount (usually 5% - 50%) for a specific period (6-12 months) or permanently, while retaining benefits and seniority on a prorated basis.

- Flexiplace-telecommuting--employees work at home or at a satellite worksite, and are usually connected to their offices by computer and/or telephone.

- Phased retirement--enables employees to transition gradually from full-time work to retirement with an interim period of part-time work during which the employee may train the replacement worker.

Flexitime is the most commonly known of the alternative work schedule options. The Federal Government began flexitime on an experimental basis in 1979; the program was permanently authorized by Congress in 1985. The private sector also has increasingly adopted the use of flexitime, not just to help employees balance their work and family lives, but for sound business reasons as well, such as better use of equipment and buildings; decreased traffic congestion; and improved attendance, punctuality, and productivity among employees.

Part-time employment has been used for a number of years also by both the public and private sectors. Some of the other options for alternative work schedules discussed above are much newer but, where reports have been prepared, they have shown to be successful in companies where they have been tried.

Steps in Developing Alternative Work Schedules

Step 1. Conduct a needs assessment

A needs assessment should be conducted to determine the need for and interest in this kind of assistance. Based on the needs and preferences of employees and the company's goals and resources, the most appropriate option should be selected. A child care benefits specialist can help conduct the assessment and select the best approach.

Step 2. Consider establishing a management-employee committee to assist in planning the program or service

A joint management-employee committee may be useful in developing the program to be offered. It can foster a sense of program ownership among employees and provide a forum for them to give input into design features of the program or service.

Step 3. Decide which alternative work schedule option will be implemented

A decision should be based on results of the needs assessment and input of the management-employee committee, if one is formed. Company goals should also be reflected in the decision. Small companies may find that offering part-time employment is more cost efficient and beneficial to them, as well as more responsive to their employees' needs. Larger companies may find flexitime or flexiplace-telecommuting or even a combination of options better suited to both company and work force needs.

Step 4. Advertize the selected alternative work schedule

Employees should be made aware of the alternative work schedule option being considered and how it will address their specific needs. Managers and supervisors should also be made aware of the option and how it will affect personnel decisions in their respective units. Publicity can be achieved through seminars/ meetings, flyers, bulletin board notices, and articles in the company's newsletter. Followup should ensure that all employees have been advised of the option available and understand how to make use of it. This can be achieved through supervisor/staff meetings or calls to employees, if in a smaller company.

Step 5. Implement necessary policy and administrative changes

Employers should ensure that appropriate policy changes are made and disseminated throughout the organization. Changes to administrative systems should be carefully monitored to ensure both a smooth transition and that employees are not penalized by the impending change. For example, when an employer is switching from traditional sick and annual leave systems to a flexible leave approach, careful monitoring is necessary to ensure that employees' accrual rates are accurately recorded and equivalent to what they were earning before. Training should be provided to those employees who will be managing the administrative systems to ensure that they are comfortable with implementing and explaining the changes to other employees.

Step 6. Design and establish a reporting mechanism

A reporting mechanism should be designed that allows for accurate tracking of hours worked, benefits due, and other administrative

provisions which may have been altered by the institution of an alternative work schedule. Costs can also be tracked to determine cost effectiveness to the employer.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- Alternative work schedules improve morale and reduce stress on parents, and contribute to lower absenteeism and higher productivity.
- Overtime costs are reduced; recruitment is enhanced, particularly for those employees who might not be available for a traditional work schedule.
- Business hours can be extended through the flexitime and compressed workweek options.
- Flexible schedules allow for more economical use of office space and equipment.

Disadvantages

- Supervisors and employees may not work the same hours, requiring greater planning and control over workflow.
- Administrative problems may arise with timekeeping or with the way benefits are assigned, prorated, or split.
- Administrative costs may be high when an option is first implemented, depending on existing systems and how quickly they can be adjusted.
- Workplace coverage may be a problem with some options.

Technical Assistance Needed

A company's benefits manager should be involved in setting up any alternative work schedule option. Companies considering options that impact a worker's benefits should consult legal counsel to ensure that there is no negative impact on the employee.

To gain insight into the pros and cons of a specific option, an employer may wish to talk with other employers, either in the same area or in the same industry, who have already implemented alternative work schedules. A child care consultant can also assist the employer with these matters.

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